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Stop-Loss nears completion

By Staff Sgt.
Michael Dorsey
Headquarters
United States Air Force

WASHINGTON — The last active duty member affected by Stop-Loss measures implemented during Operation Allied Force is slated to redeploy around Aug. 27, according to Air Force personnel officials. The intelligence officer, who was given the option of returning sooner, opted to see the job through.

His return will signal the end of the force structure program which began June 15 and suspended normal separations and retirements for airmen in career fields deemed critical to preserving mission capability.

Initially, slightly more than 6,000 active duty airmen who had requested and received permission to separate or retire from the Air Force between June and December were affected. Their

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The last person affected by Stop-Loss will return home near the end of August ending the program which began June 15.

Civilian appraisal program changes

WASHINGTON — By next spring, all Air Force civilians will be evaluated under a new appraisal program. The change is in response to feedback from supervisors, commanders and employees for a simpler and less time-consuming system.

"The job of appraising Air Force civilian employees is a very important responsibility," said Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel Lt. Gen. Donald L. Peterson. "While our old appraisal system served us well in the past, the new appraisal system is in direct response to customer feedback. Air Force commanders, supervisors and employees asked for an appraisal system that was understandable, less complex and less

time-consuming to administer."

There are three major changes in the program.

First, the new program will move to a two-level rating system: acceptable and unacceptable performance. Civilian employees will be rated on whether they meet or fail to meet performance element requirements.

Second, impact on mission accomplishment statements will be required for grades 14 and 15 for use in GS-15 screening boards. According to Air Force personnel officials, writing these statements is gener-

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NEWSBYTES

National Missile Defense Act

President Clinton signed the National Missile Defense Act of 1999 into law July 22.

The Act says it is the policy of the United States to deploy an effective National Missile Defense system as soon as technologically possible.

By law, funding for the system is subject to the annual authorization of appropriations and the annual appropriation of funds for NMD. By specifying that any NMD deployment must be subject to the authorization and appropriation process, the legislation clarifies that no decision on deployment has been made.

NCO charged with murder

An active duty master sergeant assigned to Vance Air Force Base, Okla., was arrested for allegedly shooting a civil service employee to death Friday, July 23 in Enid, Okla.

Bryan Winderweedle fired a .357 revolver at Robert Pinter during a domestic confrontation according to Enid Police Department reports.

Winderweedle, assigned to the 71st Communications Squadron as the base information manager, was taken to the Enid Municipal Jail on a charge of murder.

Emergency Service Center

The Red Cross' largest Armed Forces Emergency Service Center opens today at Fort Sill, Okla.

The center is one of two that will process 1.4 million emergency messages annually for military members and their families.

The Red Cross has established a nationwide toll-free number military members and their families can call for faster, more efficient delivery of emergency messages and verification: 1-877-272-7337.



Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. To read or send letters to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff, go to: <http://www.af.mil/newspaper/> Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered. **Due to the length of the editorial on this page, letters to the editor are only available online this week.**

Are We Ready to Lose the Next Air War?

By F. Whitten Peters

The following article by the Acting Secretary of the Air Force appeared in the "Op-Ed" section of The New York Times on Saturday, July 24, 1999.

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With little debate and without a hearing, the full House voted this week to effectively kill the F-22 Raptor aircraft, the linchpin of the Air Force's modernization program. Fortunately, the final word is not in, and the F-22 still has strong support in the Congress and from Defense Secretary William Cohen and President Clinton.

Killing the F-22 is simply not acceptable. It is wrong for national security. It is bad economics. And it would put American service members at unnecessary and unacceptable risk.

Operation Allied Force in the skies over Kosovo illustrated that air superiority is the foundation for victory on land, at sea and in the air. As we rapidly deploy decisive combat forces from the United States to the scene of hostilities, fighter jets will be the first to arrive. They will help us deter an adversary from attacking and, if deterrence fails, to fight on the ground and in the air, and win. The F-22 will guarantee success in these vital missions for decades to come.

Some critics of the F-22 contend that our country's relatively easy victories over the past 10 years prove that we don't need a new fighter. They insist that our air power is already far superior to that of any potential enemy.

Today, though, at least six other aircraft — the Russian Mig 29, SU-27 and SU-35, the French Mirage 2000 and Rafael and the European Consortium's Eurofighter — threaten to surpass the aging F-15, our current top-of-the-line air-to-air fighter.

These aircraft are marketed aggressively around the world to our allies and potential adversaries. Without the F-22, the United States runs the risk of allowing our air superiority to atrophy to the point that an adversary could inflict great harm on our previously superior Air Force.

Already, many nations like Iran, Iraq and North Korea are constructing sophisticated air defenses built around surface-to-air missile systems, like the Russian SA-10, SA-12 and SA-20. All these missile systems are available on the market today. Our current aircraft, like the F-15 and F-16, lack the F-22's stealth and supercruise abilities and will be unable to evade or destroy these air defenses without risking heavy losses.

Other weapons that might be used against these air defenses are also extremely expensive. The Air Force's conventional air-launched cruise missile and the Navy's Tomahawk cruise missile cost \$1.4 million each. Even with these weapons, we would still need an upgraded F-15, which could cost some \$40 billion — essentially the same as the cost of

completing the F-22 program, but the F-15 would have only one-third of the ability.

Using a combination of cruise missiles and upgraded F-15's does not, therefore, reflect the best stewardship of taxpayer dollars. More importantly, our young men and women would be at greater risk in future wars.

Not only does the F-22 meet the military threats on the horizon, it is also affordable as a part of a well-conceived modernization strategy the Air Force has used over the past three decades. By consistently investing about 10 to 12 percent of our total budget on new aircraft, we have been able to upgrade all our aircraft over a period of years.

In the 1970's, we bought new fighters. In the 1980's, we added new bombers. During the 1990's, we fielded the C-17, our newest transport jet. Now, our attention returns to the fighter force. The Congressional Budget Office has applauded this cyclical strategy; we have maintained the world's best air force while avoiding overlaps in aircraft purchases.

No question, the F-22 is expensive, but it is worth every penny. Each Raptor will cost on average about \$84 million to produce. The \$200-million price tag discussed recently is a figure that charges all past F-22 program costs — including research and development, testing, procurement and military construction — to the planned buy of 339 aircraft.

This is an unfair comparison because the \$23 billion we've already spent on the F-22 would be lost if the program were canceled. The key question is, What will it cost from today forward?

At peak production, the Air Force will spend about 6 percent of our budget on the F-22. This is about the same percentage of our budget that went toward developing and buying the F-15 nearly 30 years ago. This equates to less than 2 percent of America's national security budget. Our cost containment on the F-22 is a success story; it is within Congressionally mandated caps for both development and production.

The threat is real, and the F-22 program is well within our budget. The air superiority provided by the Raptor will insure victory in future battles and preserve the lives of countless Americans soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. The F-22 is an investment America cannot pass up.



Practicing religion in the AF

■ Service tries to accommodate variety of convictions

By Master Sgt. Linda Brandon

Headquarters United States Air Force

WASHINGTON — While a long-standing Air Force policy of religious tolerance seldom conflicts with personal convictions, the Air Force's senior chaplain says there still may be times when religious practices must be set aside in the interest of military service.

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) William Dendinger, chief of the Air Force Chaplain Service, said "Commanders have a deep respect for religious convictions and practices and try to accommodate them within the parameters of good order, discipline, health, safety and the mission."

In the Air Force, it is the mission of the chaplain service to provide for the free exercise of religion for all Air Force people — an effort Chaplain Dendinger said is more important than ever with today's increased optempo.

"There's much more of a felt need to have a deep interior spiritual dimension to your life so you can face the demands and pressures of the Air Force optempo today," he said. He added that the separations associated with 120-day deployments "accentuate the need to have some inner strength and to make sure your spiritual well is filled."

When it comes to balancing individual religious needs and the needs of the Air Force, the lines don't start to blur unless there is a compelling interest on the part of the Air Force according to Chaplain Dendinger.

But even then, it's a fine line as the Air Force Chaplain Service and commanders try to meet the diverse spiritual needs of more than 850,000 airmen in the Total Force.

Chaplain Dendinger said that although the Air Force population represents almost 900 different faith groups, their ability to accommodate everyone "works quite well by and large."

This article is available in its entirety online.

Peters awaits confirmation as new SECAF

WASHINGTON — Acting Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters provided confirmation testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on July 21 for his nomination to become Air Force secretary. At press time, Mr. Peters was still awaiting Senate confirmation to the top Air Force post.

The members of the confirmation panel all praised Secretary Peters' service as acting secretary and pledged their support for him as secretary when the full Senate vote occurred.

During his Capitol Hill testimony, Secretary Peters credited his success to his partnership with Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael E. Ryan and the support of his family — his wife and two of his three daughters were by his side at the hearing. However, it was his second family that the secretary raved about the most.

"The Air Force family has made my last two years the most memorable and exciting of my career," said Secretary Peters in his opening statement to the committee. "Whether part of the active force, Guard or Reserve ... I am humbled by what I see them accomplish every day and pledge my total and continued support."

"They have earned the trust and confidence of the American people with their rapid response to conflicts around the globe. They have won the peace not only by their humanitarian example, but also by their ability to command the aerospace medium that will define future battlefields."

President Clinton nominated Secretary Peters on June 17 for the permanent Air Force secretary position. His role as undersecretary and acting SECAF since November 1997 makes him no stranger to Air Force issues. Poised and confident, he answered familiar questions on the F-22, C-130J, recruiting, retention, operation tempo, the expeditionary aerospace force and other Air Force issues he's faced during his 20 months on duty.

When asked about the validity of the secretary of the Air Force position, he explained that it and other closely related positions remain necessary in order to keep the Air Force on the right path.

This article is available in its entirety online.

DOD, INS streamline citizenship process

WASHINGTON — When Senior Airman Alexander Cubas met F. Whitten Peters at an enlisted dinner in Florida last February he made an impact and an impression.

Senior Airman Cubas, a native of Honduras, asked the acting secretary of the Air Force if he would help him cut through red tape at the Immigration and Naturalization Service to speed up his citizenship request.

Although he met the residency requirement for legal citizenship, the airman's paperwork had been in the system more than two years. This was barring him from re-enlisting, holding a security clearance, or deploying.

He told Mr. Peters he would like to re-enlist; however, he was concerned that with the amount of paperwork stacked on top of his citizenship application at the INS it could take months or years to make its way through the process.

His problem was just the kind of thing the acting Air Force secretary is attuned to on his frequent visits to the field.

Senior Airman Cubas, a household goods specialist with the 45th Transportation Squadron at Patrick was sworn in as a U.S. citizen July 21.

His question generated improved relations between not only the Air Force and the INS, but the INS and entire military.

This article is available in its entirety online.

Bank begins credit checks on government cards

WASHINGTON — Bank of America, which merged with NationsBank a year ago, began performing credit checks on government travel card applications received on or after July 1, 1999.

"This is something that always existed in the contract with the government, but because of the merger, it took some time to enforce the policy," Michael Weber, program manager for the Air Force travel card program said.

He said the credit check is based on a scoring system. If an applicant scores below a cutoff established by Bank of America, the bank will recommend the individual receive a restricted card.

For information about the bank's recommendation regarding a specific credit check, or, questions, Mr. Weber suggests contacting Bank of America directly using the number on the back of the card.

This article is available in its entirety online.



Civilian appraisal program changes

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ally less work than is currently required to justify exceeding performance elements. The impact statements are optional for other grades.

Third, the new system includes a mandatory feedback form. The law requires feedback once during the rating cycle and Air Force officials say the form facilitates the discussion between supervisor and employee.

In addition, the award justification has been simplified to nine lines as opposed to the current written narrative for performance elements. For grades 14 and 15, what is written on the mission impact statements can be used as the award justification, serving a dual purpose.

Management has until December 1999 to negotiate implementation with local unions and allow at least 90 days under the new program — the minimum appraisal period — to render ratings in March 2000 using the new system.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan said, "The new Air Force civilian appraisal program is responsive, simple, understandable, fair and credible. It allows our civilians the benefit of regular feedback and is more time-efficient for commanders and supervisors."

'Highly polished' uniform items OK until 2000

The wear of satin oxidized and highly polished miniature and regular size occupational, duty and aeronautical badges with matching accouterments has been extended through Oct. 1, 2000, according to Air Force personnel officials who say the issue will be addressed by the 95th Air Force Uniform Board in October.

Stop-Loss nears completion

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career fields were identified by the Air Force as being critical to mission success.

Stop-Loss was implemented across the Total Force June 15 to preserve combat capability by assuring the Air Force had airmen in critical skills needed to carry out airstrike operations in Kosovo.

For those in critical skills but not deployed in direct support of Operation Allied Force, the program ended just seven days later on June 22. In the meantime, those deployed for the contingency were relieved of Stop-Loss obligations as they returned to their home bases.

The Air Force was the only service to implement Stop-loss during Operation Allied Force. Officials say this decision was based on the service's heavy involvement in the NATO air campaign.

Still, officials say the Stop-Loss decision was not made lightly. When Acting Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters and Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan activated Stop-Loss, they did so with caution.

"The Stop-loss decision is the hardest I've had to make and it certainly was one I made with General Ryan very, very carefully," Mr. Peters said.

"One of the things we wanted to do was make sure people didn't think we were trying to use it simply to deal with a personnel shortage. We wanted to make sure people understood that we really needed to do it [Stop-Loss] for operational reasons."

To minimize the disruption to people's lives, the Air Force analyzed immediate and long-term requirements, then took a selective approach to implementing the program by career field.

"I've met two kinds of people in the Air Force since I made the decision," Mr. Peters said. "One which said, 'Well, I didn't want to get out anyway because my unit was going and I wanted to go, too,' and some

whose lives I've really disrupted. Every time I met someone like that I made sure they knew about the waiver process."

In addition to selectively implementing the program, Air Force leaders went a step further by using a waiver process that allowed those who were affected by Stop-Loss because of their career field — but who had unusual circumstances that outweighed their impact on Operation Allied Force — to move on with their separation plans.

Ultimately, the Air Force approved 100 percent of the waivers requested. Prior to termination of the program, 192 waivers were approved. Thirty-two requests were returned without action when Stop-Loss ended.

Air Force officials say it's still too early to determine what negative impacts, if any, the recent Stop-Loss program will have on future recruiting and retention efforts.

However, one small, but positive impact has already been realized regarding retention. Most officers and airmen affected by Stop-Loss were given the opportunity to withdraw their separation or retirement papers. It is not possible to track how many separating enlisted members may have withdrawn their requests, but officials report 47 retirement and five separation packages were withdrawn by officers affected by Stop-Loss.

Mr. Peters and General Ryan again expressed their appreciation for the tremendous support and dedication Air Force men and women displayed during this challenging time.

"We want to thank you for your sacrifices and dedication to our great Air Force during the recent events in the Balkans. Your service was vital to the successful completion of our mission. We both thank you for your commitment during this critical period."



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